



The media can convey information to many people and influence public opinion. Therefore, news outlets play a significant role in planning public information dissemination about aging-related issues.

The initial steps involve:

- Developing lists of local reporters, editors, and producers to reach the target audience;
- Checking media directories available from the public library or the Internet;
- Including media specializing in the interests of ethnic and culturally diverse groups;
- Establishing that stories are truly newsworthy;
- Targeting media and shaping messages to specific topics (e.g., health reporters for medical or scientific issues or business reporters regarding demographics and real estate stories) depending on the story focus; and
- Utilizing a variety of media sources such as radio, television, print, and Internet.

### **Media Advisory/Photo Opportunity**

A media advisory should be one page and easy-to-read with an attention-getting headline. The most important and intriguing information should be included in the first paragraph followed by the “five Ws”: “Who,” “What,” “When,” “Where,” and “Why.” It is also important to include the name and telephone numbers of the person to contact for additional information. Media advisories should be sent a week before the event with follow-up calls to reporters as both reminders and for arranging interviews, as appropriate.

### **The Press Release**

Press releases increase the chance that the media will cover an event or story and provide essential information for story development when reporters cannot personally cover events. A well-written release focusing on the unique, newsworthy, and local aspects of a story increases the chances of coverage, as does the participation of prominent persons such as a mayor. Including quotes from leaders of local special interest organizations or businesses can also highlight themes such as this year’s, “The Many Faces of Aging.”

### **The Pitch**

Another effective technique involves calling a reporter and “pitching” a story or event. Since news outlets receive hundreds of press releases and media advisories each week, many are overlooked or forgotten. Therefore, the telephone can be the most effective tool in bringing attention to an event. It is also critical to be mindful of deadlines and other schedules. When calling a reporter, it is important to briefly describe the story or event and state why it is newsworthy in the context of meeting the needs of the diverse community of older adults. Recommendations of possible interviewees and related stories can also enhance relevancy and attention of the press.

### **Fact Sheets and Backgrounders**

Fact sheets are one- or two-page summary sheets that supplement press releases. They are made available to reporters to fill in information when covering a story. Simple text, charts, tables, illustrations, and interesting facts increase chance of coverage. It may also be worthwhile to include names of older members of minority and diverse groups who have related interesting or unique stories, and it is prudent to attach a list of any area resources such as health clinics, social service agencies, volunteer organizations, financial institutions, and employment, and job training partnership programs that may be pertinent.

## Letters to the Editor

The letters-to-the editor section of local newspapers offers an opportunity to highlight specific aging-related issues. These letters are an especially good way to convey important issues to other readers. Call the paper for their deadlines, length, and format requirements. In conjunction with a letter to the editor, it may be advisable to schedule an editorial board meeting to increase the chances of having a letter published.

## Guest Viewpoint

Some newspapers feature a guest viewpoint column, often found on the opinion/editorial page. A draft opinion or commentary may be submitted, but because of the volume of commentaries received in the newsroom, the editor should be notified at least a month in advance. Sending fact sheets and background information about the issue or organization will enhance chances for coverage.

## Community Calendar

Most newspapers have a daily or weekly calendar of events. Publicizing age-related issues by submitting a list of upcoming events or regular activities (health screenings, immunization fairs, volunteer workshops, tax planning, and so forth) can be most valuable.

## National Health Observances

Each year the President proclaims national observance days, weeks and months devoted to particular health, social or cultural concerns. For example, May is Older Americans Month, and November is National Family Caregivers Month. These are excellent opportunities to sponsor health promotion events, stimulate awareness of health risks, or focus on disease prevention. A list of national health observances is available from the National Health Information Center website: <http://www.health.gov/nhic>.

## Conducting Special Events & Activities

Holding a special event is a good way to recognize older adults and to let them know that they are valued members of the community. They also allow us to reach out to the public. Whether improving society's perception of older people, promoting an organization, or recognizing outstanding leadership, consider events to:

- Promote the positive aspects of aging;
- Celebrate community resources and services that improve the quality of life of older members of minority and diverse groups;
- Recognize older employees and volunteers; and
- Provide a venue for families and caregivers.

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the AoA is the official Federal agency dedicated to policy development, planning and the delivery of supportive home and community-based services to older persons and their caregivers. The AoA works through the national aging network of 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 225 Tribal and Native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations, and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers. For more information about the AoA, please contact:

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